レッドデータ・チルドレン

Red Data Children

～Solatorobo 外伝～

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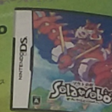
No.7 カーマイン
予知能力を持つ二刀流の凄腕ハンター。レッドやショコラにハンターやメカの知識を伝授。かつて脱走した〈セブン・チルドレン〉の1人だったことが明らかになった

レッド
ゲーム版の主人公。元気な男の子のイヌヒト。2年前、ダハーカというメカと一緒に孤児院に拾われた。拾われる前の記憶はない

No.4 ロゼ
幼い頃に研究所に連れてこられ、選ばれし〈セブン・チルドレン〉の一人としてハイブリッド化させられてしまっているネコヒトの少女。廃棄処分を前に研究所から脱走を図るが、命を狙われている

小説は252Pへ！

レッドの冒険が世界を揺るがす!?



Solatorobo それからCODAへ
価格:5,040円(税込)
機種:ニンテンドーDS
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数量限定生産Solatorobo それからCODAへ コレクターズエディション
特典:設定資料集、サントラCD 価格:7,140円(税込)

Scoop!

緊急入手!! ゲーム本編では他の〈セブン・チルドレン〉も登場する！

No.5 ルージュ
バーミリオンと共に行動する〈セブン・チルドレン〉の1人。セクシーだが気性が激しい。トランスしていられる時間が短く不完全なことにコンプレックスを抱いている

No.6 バーミリオン
ロゼの命を狙う〈セブン・チルドレン〉の1人だがトランスしていられる時間が短く不完全。脱走したロゼを処分することで、ある人物に認められたいと思っている

特集第二回はイヌヒトでもなく ネコヒトでもない、世界から拒絶された子供たち——〈セブン・チルドレン〉の謎に迫る！

誰かに必要とされたい この広い世界に生まれ落ちた意味を——

選ばれし〈セブン・チルドレン〉とは——

どこまでも続くような広く澄んだ空、そこに漂う巨大な大地——浮遊大陸。研究所を脱走したロゼが目にした世界は、大きくそして美しかった。しかしこの世界の住人はフサフサの耳と尻尾を持つイヌヒト・ネコヒトという種族であり、ハイブリッド（人のような姿）のロゼは紛れもなく異端者だった。そんな行き場のないロゼを救ったのは、どこか飄々としたハンター・カーマイン。そして自分になつくレッドの笑顔だった。今までに経験したことのない、それでいてどこか懐かしいような、そんな穏やかな日々に戸惑うロゼ。今号掲載の小説では、世間知らずのロゼがおつかいに出ることに。しかし、そんな彼女の命を狙って現れたのは、ロゼと同じような姿をしたハイブリッド・バーミリオンとルージュ。自らを選ばれし〈セブン・チルドレン〉と名乗る彼らは何者なのか？　今回はそんな〈セブン・チルドレン〉についてクローズアップ！

〈セブン・チルドレン〉はハイブリッド化できる能力を持っている模様。そしてそれはかつてロゼが所属していたという研究所で行われていたある実験と深い関係があるらしい。今のところ小説ではロゼを含むNo.4～7が登場している。すべての鍵は彼らが、あの人、と呼ぶ人物が握っているようだ。何故〈セブン・チルドレン〉が存在するのか？　何のために生まれてきたのか？　この世界とは何なのか？　真実は10月発売のニンテンドーDS用ゲーム『Solatorobo それからCODAへ』本編で明らかになるので、小説と合わせてチェックして欲しい。

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カーマインのハンター稼業を手伝うことになったロゼ。
しかし世間知らずのロゼによる
はじめてのおつかいは前途多難で!?
バンダイナムコゲームスで製作されている
ニンテンドーDS用オリジナルプロジェクト
『Solatorobo』。そのゲームへと続く
7年前の物語をノベライズで
先行連載中!

ニンテンドーDS用ソフト
『Solatorobo
ソラトロボ』
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~Solatorobo ソラトロボ それからCODA 外伝~

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3号連続集中連載・第2回

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読者ページへのご意見&ご感想はコチラ!
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“Let’s eat~!!”

“Let’s eat”

The lively voices of a boy and girl spoke in unison.

“Yes, let’s eat”

An elderly woman put a large dish in the middle of the table. A large amount of meat dishes had been served.

“Oh, this looks good”

With a fork in one hand, a man reached for the food. He wore a hat despite being indoors.

It was afternoon there at Panne’s orphanage—

A 10 year old boy, a 5 year old girl, a 20 year old man, and a silver-haired 14 year old girl. A total of 5 people sat at the table.

munch munch

The boy's brown, bushy tail gave off an mischievous appearance, as he quickly ate the meat dishes with intense vigor.

"Hey, Red, you can't eat just the meat"

The virile looking man blocked the boy's fork, and snatched some meat.

"That's so cruel, Master, you're not even going to eat anything but the meat either"

"I'm older, therefore I don't need anything else"

"Hey hey, Red, don't talk while you're eating. Carmine, you have poor manners, too. Why not follow Chocolat's example a little?"

Director Panne had annoyed expression while chiding their antics. Red's younger sister sitting next to him continued to smile at the delicious meal. With her cheeks stuffed, she unconsciously stroked her head, giving a cute appearance, along with her pinkish hair color. In the pleasant Spring, Panne and the man lowered their eyes at their tails winding and swaying.

However, there was a person among them with unmoving hands, and an uncertain expression on their face.

"Hm? What's the matter, Rose? You haven't eaten at all"

She was a silver-haired girl called Rose. Generally, Rose could not beat Red and Carmine's vigorous appetite, but now she was only eating vegetables. The girl was neither a Caninu nor a Felineko, but a Hybrid artificially created at an experiment facility, and was pursued because she had fled from there. Furthermore, apart from her silver hair, the girl had an unusual appearance of having no fur on her body, no tail, and exposed pale skin. Because of that, she was persecuted by the people, and left with nowhere to go.

That's why Carmine decided to shelter the girl about half a month ago. Every day, Rose wore a large hat and covered her hands in bandages to conceal her skin.

"What's wrong? Does your stomach hurt?"

"Well…"

Rose's unusually short and generally expressionless lips looked slightly sour, as she reproachfully looked at Carmine and Red.

"Because today is the 14th, people at the age of 14 can only eat vegetables, can't they?"

"What are you talking about?"

"That's what Red told me"

Rose tightly gripped the fork, tried to hold back tears accumulating at the edge of her eyes.

For clarification, Carmine turned his attention towards Red, who was devoting himself to shoving meat from the dish into his mouth.

"Just so you know, there's no rule like that"

Rose widened her eyes and stared at Red, Carmine, and the dish in the middle.

"Was it a lie?"

"Rose, in this world, the person who gets tricked is at fault"

Red proudly stuck out his chest.

"R-Red, that's a bad habit……"

The teary-eyed Rose bit her lip in frustration. Staying in rhythm, Red displayed himself filling his mouth with the flavorful meat to Rose.

“Oh well”

Carmine found no use in arguing with Red, and expressed his sympathies to Rose by raising his fist at him.

“ugh”

Rose held her fork and groaned, as the meal on the dish was already gone. It had long since disappeared into Red and Carmine’s stomachs.

“Good grief, Rose must not know much about the world”

Rose, who had just ran away from the facility she had mostly grown up in, was truly naive to the ways of the world.

As opposed to the others bustling, Chocolat continued to eat at her own pace with a satisfied face.

The dining table was as noisy as usual.

The various floating islands of many sizes that make up the Shepherd Republic have a mild climate all throughout the year. More than 30 years had passed since the 2nd Incantation War with the neighboring Abyssina, and the Caninu and Felineko were no longer disputing with each other, and co-existed on cordial terms.

About ten kilometers south from the Republic’s largest floating island, the capital of Pharaoh, was a small island with a population of only a few hundred people. At the edge of the small island, from the backyard of Panne’s orphanage, the sound of intense swordfighting resonated. The boy swung a sword towards the man. It was daily combat practice that they resumed after meals.

What was different from usual this time, was that Carmine was being pushed into the defensive by Red.

Rose watched in astonishment.

“Oh my, I wonder, did Carmine finally overdo it?”

Panne narrowed her eyes, and rang her throat.

Carmine did not move a step. Although he did not dual wield swords, and only used one hand, there was something about Red’s sword skills that truly looked like it had improved.

“Rose, you come, too”

Carmine called out to Rose.

“Me too?”

Rose was surprised. It was the first time she was asked to participate in the training. Rose had been neglecting her own abilities, and Carmine was aware of it.

But even so, calling her over like that, she wondered what his intentions were.

“Come on, you should head over as well, Rose. You might get a chance for revenge”

With a low voice and mischievous smile, Panne spurred her on.

Red beckoned provocatively Rose.

“Hehe, you think you can win against me?”

“Ah, like I said before—”

Chocolat sweetly puffed up her cheeks, and scolded Red for his rude manner of speech.

“You’re copying Master!”

Red arrogantly swung his sword around.

In her current state, Rose was filled with irritation. The various flavorful meat dishes she failed to taste came up in her mind and went away. She didn't want to use her power. Even so, it depended on the time and situation.

Rose was convinced. There were some things in the world that could not be forgiven, and regret for food outweighed them all.

"……That child"

Rose muttered that without changing her expression. The surrounding air slightly fluctuated.

"Can you seriously do it?"

"Make sure not to kill him"

To further fuel Rose, Carmine curved the ends of his lips onto a broad smile. Even in the television program she watched the other day, it was fate that evil would be punished.

Rose unleashed all of the power she had kept hidden in her body.

"What!? Such bloodthirst……"

Red's face instantly faded blue. Without waiting for a starting signal, Rose disappeared from Red's field of vision. In the blink of an eye, she revolved to the back of Red and began casting incantations.

"Wha-, where…"

Red immediately felt her presence, and attempted to turn around and strike, but Rose once again moved behind Red with high speed.

"What? Whoa, where!?"

Rose vanished from Red's sight. He could sense nothing more than her presence. However, Red could could slightly see her figure, causing both his confusion and his uneasiness to grow stronger.

“Wh-What!?”

Then Rose’s incantation activated, and a pattern of light materialized from the air. Rose had skillfully created a barrier around Red.

“Is this dangerous?”

Red sensed an inescapable aura, and attempted to escape from the barrier of light created by Rose, but had made his decision a little too late.

“Geh-!”

The barrier which was composed into a spherical shape, gradually narrowed its size until it was finally about several meters around Red.

“Ah, I can’t move!!”

Depending on how she applied the protection magic, it could also be used in other ways. If she confined his movement, she could deal with him as she liked. Rose kept only Red’s limbs trapped, freeing the remaining parts of his body from the barrier.

She then calmly stood in front of Red, and clenched her fist with all her might.

“UwaaaaH, I’m sorry, wait, Rose, I was wrong!!”

“Huh?”

With her middle finger, Rose flicked the nose of Red, who was firmly closing his eyes.

“Oww—”

His nose was in intense pain. His screams left pleasant feeling in her.

“Hey, are you going to only use protection magic during practice?”

Carmine was astounded, however he knew that to defeat evil, one must not hold back. That’s what the heroines of shows that children had gotten into nowadays also said.

“Swear by your tail as punishment!”

Rose mimicked the stoic heroine’s signature phrase, and sternly thrust her finger before Red.

“Uuuh, but my tail’s already…”

Because of Red’s impudent complaining, she kept the barrier up. Chocolat promptly tickled Red playfully.

“Heee, UWAAH, Stop—!”

“Children must always face self-reflection”

“Oh dear, Well then, how about we give Red’s dinner to Rose”

Panne smiled at Rose with a wink.

“Heeee, I-I was bad…”

With a miserable voice, Red self-reflected on his actions..

Panne’s orphanage was scheduled to close next month, and the other orphans had been taken in by different orphanages and foster parents. Currently there were only 2 people left, Red and Chocolat.

Carmine’s earnings as a Hunter were the main source of income for the orphanage, but because Carmine was leaving soon, he would be unable to maintain it.

“I don’t know the reason why myself, but that’s what’ll probably happen”

That was Carmine’s premonition. Panne said that it was a divine message, but it was still an incredible story to Rose.

“He’ll be gone……”

For Rose who was rejected from the world, with great pains, she was able to come across a place of peace. However, that would all be lost very soon.

“Therefore before I go, I wanted to make something to help Red and Chocolat become independent”

For that purpose, Carmine drove techniques into Red for the sake of subsisting in the world. For the mechanics-loving Chocolat, he taught her how to operate and maintain an airship.

“These guys have gotta be able to save the world.”

Carmine had cared for Red for 2 years, and trained him with his premonitions.

“Master’s premonitions really are right on the money—”

‘Did you forget about Rose’s violent revenge just now?’, Asked Red with shining eyes.

“Come to think of it, how do you get your premonitions?”

“I guess even Master will occasionally space out. I heard he sometimes sees them in his dreams. Oh, maybe he’s seeing one right now”

Carmine sat still in a chair as Red’s line of sight pursued him.

“Maybe Master is looking for a wife”

“You think so? Don’t you know it’s just some strange woman up that shows up in my dreams?”

He seemed to observe a dream in which he was traveling together with an unfamiliar Felineko, despite not knowing if it was a distant future or an event that would soon occur.

“I’m know that. Isn’t that why you say it’s that person’s destiny?”

A precocious Chocolat absentmindedly looked up in the air with colorful cheeks. It seemed that some sort of delusions of romance had been provoked.

In contrast, Red didn't seem to get it, and wasn't much interested.

"Is that… so…"

Rose that felt her heart had become discomposed. For some reason, her chest was in pain. Just who would the woman he said would accompany him be?

It was later in the evening—

"These requests are overwhelming"

With a worried look on his face, Carmine compared the birdcage before his eyes with the airship hangar.

A Hunter's occupation involved general tasks, like undertaking delivery of things that could not be sent by ordinary courier services, such as living creatures.

The request was to deliver a small bird called a bellbird to the Northern islands far from the capital. Chocolat had already taken to naming it 'Belle'.

Another request was for the collection of a scarce plant that was native only to Araune at the end of the Western islands. It seemed that a doctor's client desired it.

Airships were required for round trips in small islands located at remote places where regular flight services were not operated. Both job's deadlines were due the day after tomorrow and their directions seemed to differ from each other. It seemed that they would be unable to make it in time by performing them one after another.

"Can you not decline one of them?"

"That would just be adding an extra errand to do"

“Oh dear”

“Well, I could decline a job, but…”

Carmine scratched his head as he gave a disregarding reply to Panne’s question.

“……Your precognitive dream?”

“Yeah. I’ll only postpone the inevitable if I avoid this”

Carmine watched Rose meaningfully while he said that.

“Hm?”

Rose did not understand the intent of his stare, and tilted her head as she looked back.

“Either way, I’ve got no choice but to ask one of you to take on an errand…”

Carmine said that, and looked between Red and Rose.

“Me, me!! I’ll do it!!”

Red vigorously raised his hand.

“Rose would just get completely lost”

“Hey, that’s not true”

Rose denied that right away.

“Also, if Rose walks through the town, she’ll make a huge fuss like before”

“That’s…”

Rose was reminded of people’s reactions to her thus far.

“Hey, don’t hang your head down like that. Cheer up,”

Carmine roughly gripped Rose's head, and tousled it around.

"I guess it can't be helped. Well then, both of you will have to do it. This might be useful, Rose"

Carmine presented her with a 3-piece set of an obviously cheap-looking artificial nose, ears, and tail. Rose felt like a fool was being made out of her, and her whole body became hot.

"Don't play around"

Rose rejected it, and spontaneously pushed it away.

"I was being serious……"

Carmine's face became troubled.

"I can at least do the mission without those attachments. Don't treat me like a child"

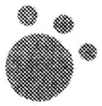
"Ooh, in that case, me and Rose will compete to see which of us completes the delivery the fastest"

"I won't lose to Red!"

Rose and Red's gazes struck each other, causing sparks to scatter.

"Will those guys really be okay?"

Feeling exasperated, Carmine scratched his head from the top of his hat while sighing.



In the end, Red and Chocolat went make the trip to collect the plants in an airship (the Asmodeus). Fortunately, the weather on the way to the destination would be calm, making it ideal for flight practice.

Rose was entrusted with transportation of the bellbird. Since she was only traveling on a regular service, anyone would be able to do the job's contents.

However, after Carmine and Panne saw her off, and she departed by herself, Rose subsequently felt an uneasiness closing in towards her chest.

"W-What should I do?"

Rose expressionlessly muttered, her inner thoughts causing her to become flustered. She made a bold claim boasting that she would be up to the task on her own, but in reality she was not confident at all.

Rose pulled her hat low over her eyes, and concealed herself with a robe to make her body appear smaller. It wasn't very reliable to just wrap both of her hands in bandages for the sake avoiding exposure of her skin.

From the beginning, Rose knew practically nothing about the facility and small island she was on. It was the middle of night when she escaped the facility and slipped into a freight ship in which she didn't even know where she was flying to at the time. The only thing that stuck in her memory was that, no matter where they went, people were cold.

Therefore, she regretted giving in to Red's provocation.

"That Red. That Red. That Red— All because I responded to him like that……"

Words flowed out one after another. Somehow, Red was able to involve Rose in a competition with him. She felt as if his heart was always somewhat a little mean-spirited.

"chirp chirp"

In the cage, the bellbird was chirping. It was injured, and had a bandage wrapped around its wing. It showed no signs of flight.

It required serious responsibility. If she failed, Carmine, who trusted Rose to be up to the task, would be disappointed. Once again, it would be made apparent that her existence was unnecessary to the world. For Rose, who was the verge of being disposed of at the facility, that thought was more terrifying than anything else.

Rose looked inside the cage. The bellbird ran wild in the cage as if it were frightened.

“D-Don’t be scared”

She seemed to have been rejected by the bird and became sad. Then she recalled Chocolat speaking to it affectionately.

Rose called out its name in a hushed voice.

“B…Belle”

“chirp!”

Surprisingly, it chirped in response to Rose’s call.

“Belle”

“chirp♪”

When she called out to it again, it replied happily without fear this time. Rose then repeatedly called out its name. Each time, the bellbird voiced a chirp.

It seemed that it accepted Rose, which was exceptionally gratifying for her.

“chip chirp”

“Is Belle suffering from being put in the cage like that?”

“chirp?”

“……I’ve suffered like that”

As far back as she could remember, she had always lived within the facility. During her torturous experiments, she had reached the point of near-death countless times. Truly, it was only due to luck that she was still alive to this day.

Rose could not help but see the birdcage's netting as cold iron bars and chains.

"Does Belle want to see more of the world?"

"chirp☆"

"I see, that's right, isn't it?"

Rose took the bellbird out from the cage. As expected, it seemed to be unable to fly due to its injury. As it jumped onto Rose's hand, it ran up her arm and got onto her left shoulder. It sat there in a fixed position with a cheery appearance.

"Well then, nice to meet you"

Rose was cheered up by the situation, and lightly walked towards a regular-service flight for departure.

The capital city of Pharaoh greatly differed from the orphanage's small island. Both in size and number of buildings, as well as the magnitude of people coming and going.

"What is this……"

Rose was absolutely overwhelmed, and her mouth hung open. She needed to change to another scheduled flight, but she had no idea where to go.

She was completely lost when it became dark, and some unknown Felineko men began to talk to her. She didn't know their exact ages, but she thought that perhaps they were the same age as Carmine.

“What’s the matter? Is this your first time in Pharaoh?”

“If that’s the case, we’ll show you around”

The man spoke over-familiarly, and tightly pulled Rose’s hand along.

“N-No thank you, I’m fine”

“Oooh—, you have a pretty cute voice don’t you?”

“Let me get a better look at your face”

Rose started walking without responding to them, but the men followed her persistently.

“Oh? What’s this? Your pet?”

One of the men reached their hand out to the bellbird on Rose’s left shoulder, causing it to flail as if in a panic.

“Don’t touch Belle!!”

She raised her face and slapped his hand away, however her hat fell off with the momentum.

“Ah—”

The expressions on the men’s faces completely changed. Seeing Rose’s unconcealed face, both men stepped back.

She was sad, but it was also a fact that she gotten used to reactions like that.

“Uwaa— what the hell, that thing, is it a monster?”

“That face is creeping me out”

The men’s loud voices echoed across the town square.

While covering her face, Rose picked up her hat and ran from the spot. The insults she could hear in the background caused tears to flow out from her. Despite growing accustomed to it, the pain her heart felt would never change.

Carmine and Red's unchanging behavior caused Rose to forget for a while, that this was the natural reaction to her.

"Kya—"

"Oops, sorry—"

Given that she had been running without properly looking, she ended up bumping into somebody. Despite losing her balance, Rose managed to endure it and brace herself.

"I-I'm sorry"

Rose wholeheartedly wanted not to stand out, and apologized without lifting her face, before leaving in a hurry.

—While Rose walked through the streets, the words of Red, who would surely make a fuss over this, came to mind. She felt bad for bringing it to her attention and regretted it.

"chip chirp"

Meanwhile, the bellbird continued to constantly chirp in state that had not changed in a while.

Unchanging behavior— Rose grasped and understood that virtue.

"Hah, hah, huff"

Rose settled her discomposed breathing, confirmed there was no one paying attention to her, and became relieved at last, whereupon her hunger was stimulated by a pleasant smell that hung in the air. Somehow she became lost in a corner where she blindly ran around food stalls lined in rows.

As if on cue, her stomach growled. She recalled that she hadn't had lunch at all.

“Please give me a piece of that skewer”

“All right, young lady”

The stall owner quickly applied soy sauce to the giu skewer, and presented it to Rose.

“Huh? There’s no wallet”

She looked in the robe’s pockets for money, but there was nothing inside. She was positive that it was supposed to be in there, however it had gone missing before she was even aware of it.

“Did I drop it?”

As expected, her color faded.

“What’s fallen at your feet, young lady?”

“Ah, this is it. Thank goodness”

Her nervous sweating came to a stop. She did not want to think about what terrible things would happen if she had lost the wallet that she was supposed to take care of.

The grilled skewer was incredibly delicious. The juicy taste spreading in her mouth created a wonderful harmony with the meat juices and spices.

With her stomach full, Rose remembered her original objective.

“That’s right, unless I get on a regular flight……”

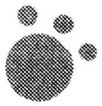
However, there were a number of homes for arrival and departure, and Rose didn’t know which one it was at all. If she asked someone, they could tell her, but she didn’t want to cause a disturbance.

At a loss, she was unable to move at the street corner, when she heard a well-projected voice.

“We’re bound for home #7 in Dax, right?”

“That’s right. Let’s hurry, it’s 13 o’clock”

Rose was thankful for the timely conversation she overheard.



“Good grief, what’s she doing? Is she really okay?”

Carmine was watching over Rose attentively from under cover.

Along the way thus far, Carmine was tired out from having to provide Rose with support. He had stayed behind to scold the flirtatious men, beat up the pickpocketing delinquent, stealthily return the wallet, and just now, nonchalantly guide Rose to her target house.

“‘Let’s hurry, it’s 13 o’clock’……Why do I have to say this again?”

“……Are you complaining?”

“Hold...on, please forgive me, Sir”

The Caninu boy’s left cheek swelled pathetically as he released the written paper with the words he had read off of. He had learned the hard way, and wouldn’t be pickpocketing anytime soon.

Rose was older than Red, however her excessive lack of world experience was extraordinarily dangerous.

Carmine wished he had told her that from the beginning, but there was also a desire of his for Rose to live confidently in the world.

Besides, he had other reasons for letting Rose act independently.

“How soon are those problems going to start again?”

The shadows of the Hybrid duo who attacked the week before flickered in his mind.

“I plan to separate myself from Rose……”

Evading the situation would just be delaying the inevitable. It would be better settle it as soon as possible.

“But that Rose girl, she truly is plenty emotional”

She would hectically cry and get angry. Although her smiles seemed to be a little stiff, the sensitive girl’s reactions were fierce.

Most of the time, Rose held few facial expressions.

At the facility, her body was exploited by cruel experiments, and in the end she had ran away only to be treated like a monster and chased.

She would be unable to bear it unless she concealed her emotions. He understood Rose’s feelings.

Only now with the small bellbird accompanying her, was Rose showing her true face.

While he thought of these things, his consciousness suddenly became distant for a moment. Recognizing that his usual predictive dream had begun, Carmine relaxed his body.

A number of vague images floated in and disappeared into his mind, including—

A scene of a Hybrid man and Rose confronting each other, causing Carmine to awaken.

“I see, that’ll be anytime now”

Carmine proceeded to board a scheduled airship flight in order to pursue Rose.

The airship continued to fly through the night, and was about to arrive at the Northern island soon.

Rose was out on the deck, looking at the outside scenery. It was quite windy.

“Beautiful……”

Rose murmured unthinkingly.

The morning sun reflected on a small floating island that was only a lake, causing the water’s surface to appear glowing.

Then, a large sky fish flew beside the airship.

“Wow……”

Fish many times larger than Rose flew through the sky swiftly. Bright floating energy from their white stomachs expanded by accumulating crystal particles.

Everything she saw was new to her. There were many things Rose had yet to know in the world.

“We’ll be arriving at Dax momentarily……”

Hearing the announcement that played from the speaker, Rose leaned forward from the handrail and focused her eyes.

“I see it”

It was just a short distance to the target hot-springs.

The floating island was exposed to crystal ore that was converted into thermal energy, causing steam to rise.

“Belle, the shaking might be dangerous, so you’re going to have to go in the cage”

“chirp”

In accordance with Rose’s words, the bellbird obediently settled into the cage. It leaned its small head from the gap of the netting and stared at Rose’s face.

“We’ll be there soon, so—”

“chirp chirp!!”

Right then, the bellbird abruptly went into a frenzy.

“What’s wrong?”

Then suddenly beyond the handrail, a large machine appeared. Before Rose could even understand what it was, the machine struck.

Rose’s body acted of its own accord; the space between her hair narrowly evading the attack.

“What—!?”

“Tch, oh well”

It seemed to have approached from a blind spot on the bottom of the ship. The man on the back of the Robo was one the two people who pursued Rose the other week. His name was Vermillion. At Baion’s experiment facility, he was the man who was given the number, 6.

“I would’ve liked for your partner to have been here, however time’s already up. If you wish for me to return this, then, tomorrow morning, come to Dax’s East 30th at the spot I’ve decided”

“Huh!? Ah, Belle!!”

The birdcage which was supposed to have been in her hand was stolen. The Robo was clasping the birdcage, which seemed like it could be crushed at any time.

“Belle!!”

Rose cried out with the limits of her voice, but the Robo separated from the ship before her eyes.

“What should I do, what should I do, what should I do!?”

At the top of the sky, she could not resist feeling helpless.

After getting off the airship, Rose headed straight to place of interest. She had contacted the orphanage from a public telephone, however both Panne and Carmine were absent.

“I have to manage this myself. He’s aiming for me”

Vermillion had limited time to be in his Trance form. Therefore, he had to take the bellbird for the sake of luring out Rose. Until she accomplished her goal, she would be unable to do anything for the bellbird.

“It looks like I have no choice but to believe him for now”

Rose said to herself.

The intended meeting place was a cliff with 3 distinct sides and no escape from any angle. She had a good day to rest her body to prepare for the following morning, but she was naturally unable to sleep, and spent the entire night panicking.

Before dawn, the surrounding became a bit more bright as cool air flew through the valley.

“……I’ve come”

A sharp sensation gave the feeling that the subject was approaching.

“You kept me waiting”

Vermillion rode on his Robo as he revealed his appearance. Power was being transmitted and filling through his whole body.

“Where is Belle?”

“Here”

With both of his hands, Vermillion toyed with the birdcage.

“Don’t treat Belle cruelly like that!!”

As she heard chirping that sounded like the bellbird shrieking, Rose grabbed hold of her heart that was visibly in agony.

“Unlike Rouge, I don’t fixate on enjoying battle. It’s fine as long as I can bring back your corpse. If I do that, then He’ll……”

“Even if you kill me, He won’t accept you”

Whether or not the experiments succeeded, that was everything to Him. He wasn’t in need of a convenient tool. How was Vermillion unable see that?

“Then what else could I do?”

“That, I don’t know”

It was because she didn’t know, that’s why Rose ran away before she could be disposed of. There was more to the world than merely the experiment facility. The world was vast.

“That’s enough, there’s no point talking”

As soon as he said that, the Robo’s mouth opened and fired light bullets at Rose. Her body barely evaded them. A heat ray hollowed out the ground, causing a burnt scent to hang in the air.

“Don’t try to dodge it. If you take one more step……Don’t you see what’ll happen next?”

Vermillion lifted the birdcage toward the cliff.

“I’ll say this, defensive spells are no good either”

“Damn……”

Rose was interrupted before she could chant the incantation. She bit her lip in regret. With no means to strike, her impatience grew stronger. In desperation, she wavered while trying to find a way to counterattack. As she rose to her feet, the next blow was fired.

“!!”

Her body moved on its own. She dodged them by quickly turning her body, however the light bullets had pierced through Rose’s right leg. The sensation from the injury was hot. The strength in her right leg involuntarily gave out, and she came to her knees.

Slightly delayed, unbearable pain hit Rose.

“AHHH—, Khhh!!”

A cold sweat ran down her forehead.

“You should have listened when I said not to move”

“Belle…… give her back……”

Vermillion made a show of lifting up the birdcage.

“Stop!! Please!!”

Rose’s desperate pleading was in vain; Vermillion casually cast the birdcage down the cliff.

“Belle!!”

The screams roaring out from Rose were tearing her throat. As if in slow-motion, the birdcage languidly fell before Rose's eyes. It was as though her own screams were delayed.

With her left foot, Rose kicked off of the ground with her entire strength, toward a safe direction. She had dove towards the bottom of the cliff.

"Belle—!!"

When Rose recovered consciousness, she found herself at the bottom of the cliff. She had barely survived due to the aid of the protection incantation she quickly chanted, despite the height she had fallen.

However, the inside of Rose's head was pure white. She was unable to think of anything.

Before her eyes, there was a single birdcage that was crushed to the point of losing its original shape. Numerous feathers were scattered around the surroundings. The unpleasant silence was enough to tell the story.

"Belle……"

Rose sat down in a daze. Tears involuntarily flowed out.

She remembered a child that she was close with at the experiment facility who had died. She didn't want to think about such thoughts, and so, she contained her emotions and did not stir her mind.

Nevertheless, she had been careless. In the days she spent with Carmine, she had unwittingly let her guard down. The bellbird had forgiven her heart, and therefore, she was overcome with grief.

"……Hey"

Someone was calling Rose.

"……Hey, are you listening?"

Hearing a familiar voice from overhead, Rose looked up with her tear-stained face.

“How long have you been crying? Come on”

Carmine appeared on his jet-black Robo (Main Gauche).

“……Why are you here?”

She was bewildered and didn’t know what to think.

But soon she became filled with sorrow, not just due to the bellbird’s death, but also regret towards failing to complete the request.

“I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry. Belle is……, Belle is……”

“Is this Belle?”

“chirp♪”

She was shocked to the extent that her heart might have stopped.

“B-B-B-Belle!!”

It seemed to be a true miracle. The bellbird stared at Rose while on Carmine’s hand.

Rose jumped to Carmine’s arm, and gazed at the bellbird.

“chirp chirp~”

The bellbird immediately flew to Rose’s arm and ran up her shoulder, and put its beak close to her cheek.

Her tears of sorrow became tears of joy.

“NO.7!! Why are you here……Did you not go to Araune?”

Vermillion showed his astonishment with a puzzled face. He had probably come down the cliff to confirm whether had Rose lived or died.

“Hehe—, it’s not just Master who came”

“Red—”

As a figure resembling Red appeared from behind the cliff, Vermillion became trapped between both sides.

In addition, an airship (the Asmodeus) was circling above the skies with refinement. It was probably being operated by Chocolat. She rolled the wings to respond to Rose.

“These guys……What is Rouge doing?”

Vermillion scowled his face in annoyance.

The situation had reversed in an instant.

“Well then, I’ll let you guys handle this”

“Huh?”

“Master?”

“You don’t want to be treated like a child, do you? Then please, take care of your own problems yourself”

Carmine said with a bold smile.

“All right, let’s do this. Rose, don’t drag your leg”

“You have such impertinent habits, Red”

Rose replied with small talk, while in a fighting spirit.

Red, with his superior agility, ran away from the Robo to look for opportunities to counterattack. Rose was unable to move as much as she thought due to the injury in her right leg. Her chances of winning were dependent on her cooperation with Red.

The battle had already begun and nearly one hour had already passed.

Although they could put up a good fight, they regretfully had few means of attack. Rose's magic incantations were only for defense, and Red was weaponless. As it was, they would fall into a stalemate, with physical strength being pointless.

"Dang, it's no good, Rose. Bare hands won't do any damage against that enormous thing!!"

"In that case, aim at his physical body"

Rose looked up at Vermillion from above his Robo. However, if she jumped up there, her unprotected figure would be exposed. It was truly risky.

"Hey, hey what's going on? Your movements are becoming dull. I thought it was unnecessary for me to step in"

"How finicky"

"Master wants to show his own hand"

Rose and Red yelled at Carmine for his irritating irresponsibility.

However, they could not afford the time.

They had little options left.

"Red—"

When Rose called to him, their lines of sight intersected, and they mutually understood each other's intentions.

"All right, let's go"

At the same time Rose began casting incantations, Red focused his attention on Vermillion.

It was all down to timing. A slight deviation could result in death. The tension in the situation rose until it was uncanny.

Rose's blood seemed to boil, and her consciousness was on the verge of becoming fading. The degree to which Rose had to carry the burden of maintaining complete force of will assaulted her. Even so, Rose's concentration was undisturbed.

Thus, the incantation had completed, and light flowed into the air.

"Now!!"

On Rose's cue, Red jumped up to Vermillon with full power.

"Are you an idiot!?"

Vermillion's Robo opened its mouth, and high-energy light bullets were fired at the defenseless Red from a very close distance. The distance and speed was completely unavoidable.

However, at the time in which Red was directly hit, a barrier net of light was formed in front of him. The light bullets' trajectory was bent in the distorted space.

"Once more!!"

Rose once again spread out one more barrier, and bent the trajectory of the light bullets that were fired again.

"Again, one more!!"

"Wha-!?"

"We're not done yet!!"

Several defensive barriers were launched parallel to each other, so as to conceal Vermillion's surroundings. Along with that, the trajectory of the light bullets from Vermillion's Robo were also being twisted one after another.

“Wow—!!”

Light bullets flew around at speeds that Vermillion’s eyes could not possibly have catched, before finally hitting Vermillion himself.

“Guagah—”

Vermillion had been flashily struck onto the ground and was repeatedly convulsing there.

The light bullets continued to circle, looping in the air. It could be said that it was a wondrous sight.

“Yeah!! Rose, that was great!!”

Though Rose exhausted her energy, she was pleased with Red hugging her excitedly. Rose held no power, but she was still immersed in a pleasant feeling of satisfaction.

“That was some good cooperation, just now”

Carmine praised them in a low voice.

Since they had no means of attack, they would used each other. It was a feat that could not have been done if the enemy had shot light bullets in advance. But even if they didn’t know, they could guide it to a place where they would be able to see.

“The plan Rose came up with; for some reason, it was transmitted to me—”

Red seemed to be in a state of lingering excitement, and continued to keep talking rapidly.

Rose was able to carry it out because she realized that Red had also understood it. Normally Red was brazen, however at the current time he seemed nothing but reliable.

“Everyone, look out—!!”

At that time, the frantic voice of Chocolat echoed from the sky.

Rose felt a tremendous bloodlust irritate her skin as it swelled up. However, Rose had been running out of power, and was unable to immediately react.

Following that, a large explosion blazed up in the location she was gathered at a moment ago. Hot wind shook Rose's face.

When Rose came to, she was within Carmine's arms.

"Th-Thanks"

Rose said that, despite Carmine's face being up close to her, as her vision was blurred.

It was the second time that they were embraced like that, except this time she was clearly aware of her circumstances, and felt horribly embarrassed.

Her body became arbitrarily hot.

"We forgot about that one"

Carmine stared at the middle of the smoke from the explosion with an intense expression.

When the smoke drifted away and the view became clear, another Robo had appeared. It was carrying Vermillion.

"You……you're name is Rouge"

She was another Hybrid who had pursued Rose the other week.

"You're too late; it's about time we got even"

Red was powerfully provoked. It seemed that Rouge had attacked the area that Red and the others were in.

"Shut up, you'll definitely pay back this debt!!"

Rouge spat out those parting words as she left.

“Are we going to give chase?”

Red pointed to Rouge as he asked Carmine.

“Ah, we’d better give up. Chasing after her would be akin to suicide”

Carmine scowled his face and shook his head.

He wondered if he saw something like that in a dream.

“I guess the conclusion has been postponed”

Carmine gave an exasperated shrug of his shoulders.

Even though they had walked into a trap, they still had to properly carry out the request.

However, Rose’s footsteps were heavy.

“Haah……”

She wondered how many times she had sighed.

She was completely affectionate towards the bellbird, and did not want to part from it. However, Carmine instructed her that it was part of the job.

“I can’t break a promise like that”

It seemed that was how the world worked.

Rose was a day behind schedule, and brought the bellbird to the delivery destination.

“Thank you for going through all that trouble”

An elderly woman with an apron received the birdcage.

“This bird we picked up was injured along the way here. It was supposed to be brought here once it could move again”

The elderly woman said as she opened the lid of the birdcage.

When the bellbird got on the elderly woman’s hand, it nimbly leapt onto Rose’s left shoulder.

“chirp♪”

The bellbird chirped as if everything was normal.

“B-Belle—”

“Hahahaha, it got nostalgic”

“Come on, go back. Isn’t this your home, Belle?”

Rose urged the bellbird to the cage, but it wouldn’t budge.

“No, no, you keep it”

“Huh!?”

“This bird also has pleasant chirping”

It was a very unexpected offer, and Rose truly couldn’t arrive at a decision.

Rose turned her head and looked up at Carmine.

“It’s good”

“It’s okay?”

Rose’s lips became slightly loosened.

“Oh, did you smile a little?”

As Carmine pointed that out, Rose’s expression became stiff.

“Ah, you’ve still got some trouble. Here, this is how you smile”

Carmine pushed both ends of Rose’s lips up.

Rose was touched by Carmine, making her heart beat faster.

The bellbird briskly hopped on Rose’s left shoulder, and chirped delightfully.

Taking the opportunity, Rose and the others were told to enter the hot-springs, and they were to stay overnight. It seemed that it was in an off-period as there were no other guests, so they could enter without feeling uncomfortable. In addition, the outdoor mixed bath was surrounded by considerably large rocks, and the view was obstructed by steam.

Carmine appeared to have brought wine to drink and a snack to go along with it. Red and Chocolat were joyfully swimming.

It was the first time Rose had experienced a bath with such pleasant feeling like that. It seemed to have various effects, such as being effective against the cold.

On the outdoor bath’s guide board, unfamiliar characters were lined up side-by-side.

“But…… I can read this……”

“It’s Abyssinian. It looks like the number of tourists from there has increased recently”

Carmine’s voice came from behind the steam.

Abyssina was located North of the Shepherd Republic, and was its enemy in war over 30 years ago.

“Rose’s homeland might be Abyssina”

Even though he suggested that, it didn’t ring any bells for Rose. She didn’t have much of her memory from before she was taken to the experiment facility.

Rose’s body was deeply submerged in the bath.

The injury on her right leg from when she was shot by Vermillion had already started to heal. That was normal for bodies that had been transformed into Hybrids.

“You know, things may gotten dangerous, but you held out nicely this time”

“Really?”

Her elated voice asked him in return. However, Rose knew. Carmine had always been watching over her. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been able to appear at that time.

“……Thanks for today”

“Hm?”

“I mean about Belle……”

The bellbird jumped joyfully into the bath, and floated on the warm water. If Carmine hadn’t shown up when did, the bird would have been killed.

And if Carmine hadn’t carried her out of the explosion’s way, Rose would have also died in it.

“……I’m very happy”

“Then smile”

“Because whoever laughs last, laughs best?”

As Rose anticipated his words, Carmine shook her body from the other side of the steam.

“That’s right. I’m certain laughing face would be pretty cute”

“C-Cute……”

He told her something she had never thought about, and her body became hot, as her heart beat fiercely.

“Your crying face is cute as well”

Carmine’s stifled laughter was audible.

“‘Belle, she’s dead’, you sounded like a small child”

“I’m not a child!”

Rose was embarrassed and bluntly refuted him.

“Who was crying?”

Red abruptly appeared from the hot bath to try and tease Rose.

“I wasn’t crying”

“Yeah, you were crying”

“Chocolat!”

Rose poured hot water on Red and Chocolat, and not to be out done, the two retaliated by splashing back. They began chasing each other while clamoring around.

“sigh……”

Carmine was in a slightly tipsy mood as he looked up at the full moon suspended in the night sky. The clattering of Rose and the others, which should have been noisy, was strangely comfortable to his ears.

“It’s almost time……”

It was half a month until Red’s birthday……

There was little time remaining.

“If I tell them I’m leaving this country, they’ll get angry……”

Carmine rinsed his face.

Carmine had absolute trust in his precognitive dreams. He had no intention of going against them. It was because of his premonitions that they were able to survive up to now.

That premonition revealed to him; the figure of Carmine traveling a foreign country together with a single girl—

Rose had not let the writing on the guide plate leave her head.

“Where are you……”

Her parents who had given her life were somewhere in the world. It gave her a mysterious feeling.

“Would they even want to see me?”

Rose stared at the water’s reflection as she questioned herself. A girl with no ears on her head, and a flat nose stared back.

“I don’t know”

She wondered if a portion of her memories were erased when she was taken away. She remembered nothing of her parents.

“Now……”

Now she was content with the days she spent with Carmine and the others. Even if she did seek more than that, it was enough for Rose.

The joyful sounding voices of Red and Chocolat within hot-springs induced drowsiness. In comfortable tiredness, Rose slowly closed her eyes.

【Continued Next Issue】